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CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS
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fact sheet

WOMEN AT THE DEMOCRATIC & REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTIONS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Women Chairs of the National Committees

1972 Jean Westwood, Chair, Democratic National Committee

1974-1977 Mary Louise Smith, Chair, Republican National Committee

Women Chairs of the National Conventions

1976 Rep. Corinne "Lindy" Boggs (LA), Chair, Democratic National Convention

1980 Sen. Nancy Landon Kassebaum (KS), Temporary Chair, Republican National Convention

1984 Gov. Martha Layne Collins (KY), Permanent Chair, Democratic National Convention

Women Keynoters at the National Conventions

1972 Anne Armstrong, Co-chair, Republican National Committee

1976 Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-TX)

1984 Katherine Ortega (R), Treasurer of the United States

1988 Ann Richards (D-TX), State Treasurer

Percentage of Women Delegates to the National Conventions -- 1900-1988

Convention	Democrats*	Republicans
1900	**	***
1904	**	***
1908	**	***
1912	**	***
1916	1%	***
1920	6%	3%
1924	14%	11%
1928	10%	6%
1932	12%	8%
1936	15%	6%
1940	11%	8%
1944	11%	10%
1948	12%	10%
1952	12%	11%
1956	12%	16%
1960	11%	15%
1964	14%	18%
1968	13%	17%
1972	40%	30%
1976	34%	31%
1980	49%	29%
1984	50%	44%
1988	49%	35%

*Percentages do not necessarily reflect the proportion of convention votes held by women delegates; many Democratic delegates have held fractional votes.

**Less than 1%. Actual numbers: 1900, 1; 1904, 0; 1908, 2; 1912, 2.

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Sources include: David, Goldman, and Bain, The Politics of National Party Conventions (1960); Davis, National Conventions in an Age of Party Reform (1983); Lynn, "Women and Politics: The Real Majority" (1984); National Women's Political Caucus, Democratic Women are Wonderful (1980); National Women's Political Caucus, Republican Women are Wonderful (1980); Breckenridge, Women in the Twentieth Century (1933); Congressional Quarterly (various issues); Fisher and Whitehead, "Women and the National Party Organization" (1944); and official proceedings of the Democratic conventions.

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"FIRSTS" FOR WOMEN AT THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

1876 First woman to address a convention -- Sarah Spencer (R).[1]

1892 First women alternates to a convention -- Therese Jenkins (R) and Cora Carleton (R).[1]

1900 First woman delegate to Republican convention -- Frances Warren.[1]
First woman delegate to Democratic convention -- Elizabeth Cohen.[2]
First woman to second the nomination of a presidential candidate -- Elizabeth Cohen (D).[3]

1916 Women first appointed to Democratic convention committees.[2]
Both conventions adopt women's suffrage planks, although the planks are not strongly worded.[3]

1920 First women appointed to Republican convention committees.[3]
Democratic party adopts rule to give women and men equal representation on the Democratic National Committee.[2]

1924 Republican convention adopts rule to give women and men equal representation on the Republican National Committee (women had been admitted as "associate" members with equal representation in 1923).[1,3]
First woman to chair Credentials' Committee -- Lena Springs (D).[2]
First woman from a major party to be nominated for Vice-President -- Lena Springs (D).[2]
First Black woman delegate -- Louise M. Fairweather (R).[1]
First woman vice-chair of a convention -- May Kennedy (D).[2]
First woman chair of Committee on Permanent Organization -- Elizabeth Price Martin (R).[1]

1928 First Republican woman to chair the Credentials Committee -- Mabel Walker Willebrandt.[1]

1932 First Republican woman named to Resolutions Committee -- Martha Rober de Romeo.[1]
First Democratic woman named to Resolutions Committee -- Jean S. Whittemore.[3]

1936 First convention with equal number of women and men serving as vice chairs (Democratic).[2]
Women and men given equal representation on a Platform Committee (Democratic).[2]

1940 Republican party first endorses the Equal Rights Amendment.[1]
First woman to nominate a presidential candidate -- Gladys Pyle (R).[4]

1944 First time women are selected as co-chairs of all major party committees (Democrats).[4]
First woman chosen as permanent secretary of the convention -- Dorothy Bush (D).[4]
First time women and men are given equal representation on the Platform and Resolutions Committee in the Republican party.[4]
Democratic party platform supports the Equal Rights Amendment for the first time.[2]

1948 First woman secretary of the Republican convention -- Mrs. Dudley Hay.[1]

1951 First woman asked to chair a national party -- India Edwards (D) (she declined).[2]

1955 First Black woman member of the Democratic National Committee -- Gladys Ford Duncan.[2]

1960 First woman executive director of a national convention -- Josephine Good (R).[1]
Rule established that women and men should have equal representation on all national convention committees (Republican).[1]

1964 First woman in a major party to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency -- Sen. Margaret Chase Smith (R).[1]

1972 First woman keynote speaker at a convention -- Anne Armstrong (R).[1]
McGovern-Fraser Commission guidelines require equal representation of women and men in delegations to the Democratic convention.[2]
Delegates and Organization Committee guidelines recommend (but do not require) equal representation of women and men in delegations to the Republican convention.[1]
First Black woman to co-chair a convention -- Yvonne Brathwaite Burke (D).[1]
First Black woman in a major party to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency -- Rep. Shirley Chisholm (D).[2]
First woman to gather a substantial number of convention votes for the vice-presidential nomination -- Frances Farenthold (D).[2]
First woman to chair a national party -- Jean Westwood (D).[2]

1974 First woman chair of the Republican party -- Mary Louise Smith.[1]

1976 First woman chair of a national convention -- Rep. Corinne "Lindy" Boggs (D).[1]
First Black woman to deliver a keynote address at a national convention -- Rep. Barbara Jordan (D).[2]

1980 Democratic party rules require quotas ensuring 50% of the delegates at the convention are women.[1]
First woman to be temporary chair of the Republican convention -- Sen. Nancy Kassebaum.[1]

1984 First woman vice-presidential candidate selected -- Rep. Geraldine Ferraro (D).

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[1]National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), Republican Women are Wonderful. Washington, DC: National Women's Political Caucus, 1980.

[2]National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), Democratic Women are Wonderful. Washington, DC: National Women's Political Caucus, 1980.

[3]Breckenridge, Sophonisba P. Women in the Twentieth Century. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933.

[4]Fisher, Marguerite J. and Betty Whitehead. "Women and the National Party Organization," American Political Science Review. (1944) 38:895-903.

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